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Vice President Quayle

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American Leadership in the Pacific

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Following is an address by Vice President Quayle before the American Business Council, Singapore, May 3, 1989.

As everyone knows we are only 11 short years away from the end of the century and the beginning, not only of a new century, but a new millennium. At a time like this when the shape of the future is on everyone's mind, it's especially appropriate for the new American Administration to consult with its Asian friends and to lay out its perspective on the developments in this critical region of the world. It is also important to solicit the views of our friends.

I can tell you the discussions with Prime Minister Lee [Kuan Yew] and others were very revealing. Complete understanding of the geopolitical concepts that are involved, the discussions, and challenges—not only today, but what our challenges are going to be in the future—were very much on both of our minds. President Bush made a trip to Asia last February, and now I am back—two trips within the first 100 days of this Administration to Asia show the importance of this region of the world to the United States. My trip here will provide me with first-hand experience of an area where amazing advances in economic growth and technological development guarantee it an important role in the years to come.

But it is also an opportunity to make some fundamental points about America's view of itself, and its role in Asia and the Pacific in the years ahead. Perhaps the most spectacularly accurate political prediction of all time was made by the great French social critic and student of democracy, Alexis de Tocqueville. Writing back in 1835, De Tocqueville declared:

> . . . there are at the present time two great nations in the world which seem to tend toward the same end, although they started from different points: I allude to the Russians and to the Americans. Both of them have grown up unnoticed, and while the attention of mankind was directed elsewhere, they have suddenly assumed a most prominent place among nations. And the world learned of their existence and their greatness at almost the same time. The American relies upon personal interest to accomplish his ends, and gives free scope to the unguided exertions and common sense of the citizens; the Russian centers all the authority of society in a single arm. The principal instrument of the former is freedom; of the latter, servitude. Their starting point is different, and their courses are not the same, yet each of them seems to be marked out by the will of heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe.

These words were written at a time when the notion of a global destiny could not have been more remote from the minds of most Americans. Yet in the 150 years since De Tocqueville delivered his prophecy, America and the Soviet Union have, indeed, come to sway the destiny of the globe. The question is, will they continue to do the same thing in the 21st century?

As everyone now recognizes, an extraordinary ferment is currently underway inside the Soviet Union on almost every issue. Wide-ranging and potentially explosive debates are in progress. The failure and abuses of the Soviet system are not only admitted, but exposed in astonishing detail in the official Soviet press. The need for a fundamental restructuring of the Soviet economy and policy appears to be accepted by virtually all currents of political opinion in the Soviet Union.

What does all this mean for the future of the Soviet empire and Soviet global ambitions? I think it is fair to say that the new Soviet policies—*glasnost*, *perestroika*—derive from the recognition by the Soviet leadership that their system has failed, and that their country has fallen behind—not only America and Europe but also many nations in the Pacific. Their propensity to center all authority of society in a single arm, as De Tocqueville put it, is poorly adapted to the emerging realities of the next century—a century where political, economic, and social openness will increasingly be seen as keys to national success.

Whether the Soviet system can successfully adapt to the 21st century is, of course, an open question. We certainly wish the long-suffering Soviet people good will. We applaud recent measures to increase openness in the press, to ease restrictions on religion, to take the first faltering steps toward democracy, and to contribute constructively to settling certain international disputes.

Nevertheless, barring some really radical and fundamental shift in the very basis of Soviet power, it's hard to

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see how the Soviets can continue to play the global role to which they so clearly aspire. At present, the basis of Soviet power is the Soviet military establishment—that goes without saying. Yet it is becoming increasingly clear that the economic performance of the Soviet Union is inadequate to support such massive military forces or military efforts of client states whose own economies are also declining or in collapse.

America's Unchanging Fundamental Principles

Let me turn now to my own country, the United States. I think of the most striking facts about my country is that today, as in the days when De Tocqueville first issued his famous prophecy, "America continues to give free scope to the unguided exertions and common sense of its citizens." Although a great deal has happened in the world between Andrew Jackson's Administration and George Bush's Administration, America's fundamental principles have remained unchanged. People who accuse the Americans of being inconsistent and fickle would do well, I think, to bear fundamental fact in mind.

Of course, we Americans have often been taken to task for adhering so tenaciously to our convictions. Our critics argue that perhaps the democratic form of government worked well enough in the United States, but it was hopelessly unsuited to other parts of the world. It was particularly inappropriate to the Third World, we were told, because most Third World peoples lack a democratic tradition and because economic development requires centralized control and planning.

Yet today, it is clear that democracy—personal freedom within a framework of representative government—is, indeed, the wave of the future. In Latin America for example, most nations have either recently accepted democracy or are moving clearly in that direction. While in Asia, old traditions of authoritarian government are fading fast from the scene. At the same time, free markets and private initiative are the new guideposts to economic development, for the simple reason that their principles of economic organization clearly work. The nations of the Pacific rim, in particular, have shown the world that free enterprise economies are at least as effective in the developing world as they are in the more industrialized nations.

Is it a mere coincidence that democratic governments and free-market economies are developing side by side throughout the world? It is not a coincidence. I think it is not. Rather it seems to me that economic development and political freedom are two sides of the same coin. Both are necessary to achieve genuine modernization.

Continuing U.S. Global Commitments

Let me return to the rather special case of the United States. While most are willing to acknowledge the remarkable dynamism of American society, some question whether America will continue to fulfill the promise that De Tocqueville predicted for it. Certain critics question whether America has the discipline or the determination to remain competitive in the global environment or to manage its fiscal problems in a responsible manner. Others point specifically to America's security commitments and wonder whether it can continue to shoulder the burdens of a far-flung alliance system.

The United States, critics say, is a nation in decline, our budget and trade deficits are symptoms of a deeper malaise. The burden of international leadership has grown too heavy for America to bear. If we are to avoid disaster, we must pull back from our global commitments. That way, at least, we can decline gracefully.

Books predicting America's imminent fall from world leadership have made the best seller list in my country. Prophets of American decline have become virtual academic celebrities. That being the case, what are our friends in Asia, and the rest of the world, to conclude? Will the United States remain a key player in the Pacific region? Can it still be relied upon to sustain the security commitments which have helped preserve peace and stability in an area of geopolitical and ideological conflict?

As you and other members of the international community address these questions, there are four important factors that you should bear in mind. Perhaps the most important thing to remember about the current wave of "declinist" thought in the United States is that it is hardly a new phenomenon. On the contrary, since the end of World War II, Americans have been periodically scaring themselves with visions of imminent collapse.

The first such scare occurred back in 1957 and 1958, in the wake of the Soviet missile launches of Sputnik. The fashionable fear that swept the United States then was that Soviet technological superiority had relegated us to a position of permanent inferiority. Of course, these fears proved to be groundless. The United States quickly regained the lead in military high technology. Today, as a result of revolutionary advances in strategic defense systems, low observable or "stealth" aircraft, and other advanced aerospace technologies, this lead, in all probability, will become wider.

The second great scare occurred at the end of the 1960s, when it became fashionable to argue that the United States and Soviet Union were both losing their primacy. The bipolar world of the immediate postwar period was said to be giving way to a five-cornered world in which Japan, China, and Europe would enjoy superpower status. Twenty years later, however, this development has yet to occur.

This was quickly followed by a third wave of pessimism, triggered by the OPEC [Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries] oil embargo of 1975, which envisioned the United States as a helpless giant unable to secure the energy resources necessary to support our growing economy. Then, in the late 1970s, the Soviet Union once again became the focus of the fourth declinist wave of thought, as the American withdrawal from Southeast Asia, together with a series of Soviet foreign policy successes, led many to conclude that the global "correlation of forces," as they called it, had shifted decisively in the favor of the Soviet bloc. All these fears enjoyed a considerable intellectual vogue for a time; yet again, all were proven to be false.

The Condition of America Today

What is the truth about the condition of America today? The truth is that there are fundamental sources of strength in the American economy that are ignored by the prophets of decline. The United States is entering its 78th consecutive month of economic growth, the longest period of peacetime economic expansion in American history. During this period, real per capita income for Americans has risen more than 15%. Employment has grown faster in the United States than in other leading industrial nations, more than 2½ times faster than Japan, for example. We have produced more than 17.5 million jobs over the last 6 years, more than Western Europe, Canada, and Japan combined, and average U.S. productivity is greater than that of any other major industrialized country. Strong productivity growth, combined with wage restraint and adjustment in the foreign exchange value of the American

dollar, has restored the international competitiveness of U.S. manufacturing. In fact, recent labor costs in the United States relative to other major industrial nations fell 41% between 1985 and 1987, and we are now lower than they were in 1980.

The result has been a dramatic improvement in our trade balance. The trade deficit has fallen from a peak of about $170 billion to an annual rate of about $120 billion, according to the most recent statistics. Perhaps an even more telling sign of our competitive strength is that exports have risen dramatically over the last few years, growing by an impressive 27% in 1988 alone. I think that it is safe to conclude that the United States remains healthy and vigorous despite, or perhaps because of, a certain brooding and self-critical disposition. The United States will continue to be engaged with and open to the world. We recognize that some nations are advancing rapidly in economic power, and that others rival us in military power. No nation, however, either now or in the foreseeable future, ranks as high as the United States in virtually all the major sources of national power: population size and education, natural resources, economic development, political stability, social cohesion, military strength, ideological appeal, diplomatic appliances, and technological achievement.

U.S. Leadership and Security Roles

Because it is such a multidimensional power, America has a unique leadership role to play in the Pacific. Let me be very clear, we intend to play it. We will, therefore, continue to work closely with our Asian friends and allies to keep our markets open, to support free trade, and to oppose what President Bush has aptly called, "The fool's gold of protectionism." We believe that an open trading system is good for all countries—importers as well as exporters. Our goal is to open markets, not close them, to create an ever-expanding international trading system based upon fair and enforceable rules. We prefer to use multilateral negotiations to achieve our objectives, but we will also engage in bilateral efforts and take selective unilateral actions where these can be effective and where they are necessary for opening foreign markets to U.S. goods and services. While pursuing this active agenda with our trading partners, we will work equally hard to ensure the openness of the U.S. economy to fairly traded goods and services.

What, then, of the American security role? Here, too, our fundamental objectives remain constant. Globally, the containment of Soviet power remains the cornerstone of American foreign policy. The doctrine of containment, as originally formulated, called on the United States to confront the Soviets with an "unalterable counterforce at every point where they show signs of encroaching upon the interests of a peaceful and stable world." Were we to do that, it was predicted, we would "promote tendencies which must eventually find their outlet in either the break-up or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power."

Well, for the past 40 years, America has pretty much followed this course; with some notable exceptions, we have succeeded in containing the power of the Soviet Union and its clients. The result has been, more or less, what the architects of containment predicted it would be: deprived of the aura of historical inevitability, the Soviet system is being forced to confront its own "internal contradictions," meanwhile, sheltered behind America's broad shield, the nations of the free world, both here and in Europe, have made brilliant use of the time America's containment policy won for them and have succeeded in overcoming the legacy of war and devastation to become vibrant and robust societies in their own right. The recovery of our European and Asian allies under America's security umbrella must surely be reckoned as one of the greatest foreign policy successes of our time and irrefutable demonstration of the fact that America advances its own interests best when we foster the growth and security of our friends and allies.

The very success of containment poses new and difficult challenges. The new political dynamics of reform in the Soviet Union and some of its client states afford important opportunities for advancing Western interests. At the same time, a new instability and unpredictability has been introduced into the East-West equation. There are promising signs of change in Soviet security policies. But these have not yet been translated into substantial reductions in the overall Soviet military threat, while their political impact in the West has been quite enormous. With declining levels in East-West tension, it is all too easy to neglect the requirements of national security and the maintenance of strong alliances. Declining concern for security issues is also bound to raise substantially the political importance of interallied frictions over trade and other economic issues.

In light of the current developments, it is all the more vital for the United States to maintain an active role and presence in the Pacific. Now, more than ever, it is necessary to affirm and cultivate our alliance relationships. These relationships are not intended solely to address urgent needs or immediate threats. They are a reflection of abiding geopolitical realities. The United States and its Asian friends and allies must take the longer view of our collective security requirements. We must be more mindful than ever of the fact that the strength of the alliance relationships rests not on military power alone but on shared political purposes. U.S. policy in Asia will also continue to insist that democratic political institutions, with a commitment to openness and criticism, are the surest means of building a national political consensus—the foundation of true security. We will continue to support democratic reforms as they develop naturally, even while recognizing that there is no set pattern for democracy and no standard or assured outcome to processes of political change. We will continue to monitor human rights practices and to register our concern when we think fundamental freedoms, including the open press, are violated.

Future Peace Through Strength

When Americans and Singaporeans look to the future, we both share similar evaluations of the evolving international situation. We both agree on the necessity of peace through strength. We both agree that we must complement military deterrence with an active diplomacy that seeks political solutions to regional tensions. We both condemn Vietnam's illegal occupation of Cambodia and are united in calling on Hanoi to withdraw completely its remaining forces in Cambodia. We agree that once Cambodia has achieved a genuine end to Vietnam's occupation, free elections should be held under, a transitional government led by Prince Sihanouk. We agree that the discredited Khmer Rouge must never be allowed to seize power again.

As far as the Soviet role in the Pacific is concerned, the United States and our Asian friends agree that the Soviet Union must be judged by its actions, not by its rhetoric. The Soviet

Union has placed the improvement of its relations with China on the top of its agenda; General Secretary Gorbachev will be visiting China shortly. We believe that lessening Sino-Soviet tensions is a logical course for both nations to pursue, and we have no objections to it, provided that any new relationship harms neither our own interests, nor those of our friends, and that it directly addresses our common security concerns.

More generally, we recognize the Soviet interest in sharing in Asia's economic boom and in increasing its access to the region. But Moscow has a long way to go to achieve this goal. Besides reforming itself, the greatest contribution it can make to reducing tension and building confidence in Asia, would be to end its military presence in Vietnam and its support for Vietnam's occupation in Cambodia. In pursuing our common destiny in the Pacific, the United States looks forward to strengthening and deepening our friendship with Singapore. Your role in Asia and, indeed, the world testifies to the fact that a nation's influence is a function not of its size, but of the character of its people and the quality of its leadership.

Singapore's commitment to market principles has made an inspiration to developing countries around the world. Singapore's unwavering commitment to free trade has made it a model for economic development. We welcome Singapore's interest in pursuing a "U.S.-ASEAN [Association of South East Asian Nations] initiative" and look forward to a dialogue with ASEAN in the coming months to discuss this initiative and others like it. Singapore's role in ASEAN has made it a force for patience, unity, and steadfastness in Southeast Asia. And Singapore's role in the United Nations in the nonaligned movement has served to encourage moderation, reasonableness, and peaceful resolution of disputes. These are qualities that Americans deeply admire, and that we ourselves seek to emulate, as we both face the challenges of the 21st century.

Our two nations have much in common. We have common objectives and concerns. I came to Singapore impressed by its people and its capacity for economic growth, and I leave with strong favorable impressions of Prime Minister Lee, his younger generation of leadership, and the Singaporean people who have created this economic miracle. ■

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